

Roar of the Black Bear

Newsletter for the 126th AA

Volume I

16 April 2008

Greetings from Lt. Cain

To the families of the 126th, it is my pleasure to serve as your rear detachment commander and to represent this fine organization of people and Soldiers.

I would like to start by telling ya'll a little bit about me. I am from the great state of Arkansas, and yes I do wear a cowboy hat and boots on the weekend. I recently moved to Maine and found that it does get really cold and snows a lot! This winter was a unique experience for me, considering I have only seen snow three times in my life, but I pulled threw okay. This is a beautiful state and I look forward to seeing it in the summer. I recently became engaged and we are getting married this June back in Arkansas. My fiancé is also in the Maine Guard, Lt. Jasmine Chase.

Paige and I are working very well together and we are proud to serve as your representatives. I look forward to meeting each and every one of you through out this deployment.

May GOD Bless you and your family!

Very Respectfully-
2LT Eric S. Cain
Rear Det. Commander
126th AA

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wives Night out → 2nd Friday of every month.

Craft Night → First Monday of every month at the Bangor Armory 6 to 8 p.m.

FRG Meeting → May 10 at 1:00 p.m. at Bangor Armory. Details inside.

Memorial Day Parade → Monday May 26th in Bangor. Contact Jodi Veneziano at jodi@nazmail.com or call 848-7892.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Words from Paige → 2

Commanders Page → 3

Whats Happening → 5

Youth page → 7

CSM Page → 8

Spotlight Soldier → 9

Thoughts from Paige.

So here it is April, and we find ourselves ready for spring and as I sit here writing, I have yet to see any bare ground, although the driveway is all mud. I guess that mud season comes before spring this year.

It has been four months since our soldiers have left; I hope all are doing well. I feel that time has gone by fast so far, although since leaving for Iraq, it’s seemed to drag. Having played this game before, I remember the feelings well. Every time the phone rings, I run for it praying it’s my soldier. Being disappointed when it’s not and then there’s the missed calls, Oh those hurt the most. I pray that your communication has been successful, and that no one has been cut off, that I remember the most. Five years ago the phones weren’t so good. After waiting for hours, yes I mean hours, soldiers got only a few minutes, then were lucky if the line didn’t go dead. Things are much different now. We are very fortunate.

In January, just after our soldiers left we met for a Family Readiness Group (FRG) meeting. Many of us received our flat soldier’s pictures and put them onto foam board. We were also visited by ladies doing a independent film on flat soldiers. We have yet to hear of a release of that film. If anyone was there that day, and didn’t sign a release form to be on film, and are interested, please let me know. I can get a form for you.

The ladies in the Bangor area have been very busy. There is a monthly ladies night out, and family times each month to recognize the children with birthdays. These activities are open to every family in the unit and takes place at the armory. Thank you so much to Stephanie Campbell and Sandi Daniels for arranging these events.

Our next FRG meeting will take place on May 10, 2008. The monthly family time also takes place that day, so the meeting will start at 1:00pm. We will be having a guest coming to teach us how to make spring wreaths. All you need to participate is a 18inch grape vine wreath, which can be purchased at any craft store. If you have these items, glue gun with extra sticks, and a wire cutter, please bring them along to. It should be a good time, so think Spring!

I hope to see all very soon, wish you very happy thoughts, and hang in there!

Paige Dennison
Unit Volunteer Coordinator



WE HAVE ARRIVED!

We successfully arrived in Iraq the first week of April and have moved into our Forward Operating Bases / Forward Sites.

The unit is excited to be on location and poised to start our jobs. We moved in three different groups, and finally met up at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Buehring, formally known as FOB Udairi. This was the same location many of us were stationed on our last deployment. It was clear that things had changed in the last four years. The base had more than tripled in size and it resembled a base back home more than a camp in a combat zone. We spent about ten days in Kuwait finishing any required training, maintaining our equipment and getting organized.

We have settled in for the most part in our new home. I have personally seen every location we are located at and the living conditions are better than expected. We are housed in rooms, air conditioned with beds, not cots. Most of us have bought refrigerators, TVs and other items to make things a little more home like. A limited number of phones and the internet are readily available. Reminder, that we are seven hours ahead. It is somewhat difficult to get an available phone when family members back home are available to receive a call. On 13 APR 08 we had a formal Transition of Authority (TOA) with the unit we are replacing. C-2/238th from Indiana and Colorado folded its colors as we unfurled ours as part of a formal ceremony held in our hanger. Our Battalion Commander, LTC Covert and Brigade Commander, COL Ball was



on hand to say good-bye to the members of C-2/238th and welcome us to their Command. In the past few days we have taken on the full mission and have conducted several MEDEVACS from all of our locations.

All soldiers will be authorized fifteen days of leave. Each soldier has requested specific dates but there is no guarantee that they will get the dates they requested. All soldiers will be afforded leave if they so desire.

I am confident that our deployment will be no longer than a total of one year. I have received communication with the unit that will be replacing



us and they are on track to meet our one year timeline. So there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

It is good to hear that the family program is active. Keep up the good work. I appreciate

the effort you are putting into having a successful family program.

You all should have or will be receiving a call from LT Cain. LT Cain is the rear detachment Officer in Charge. LT Cain is a direct link to me. I communicate weekly with him and his sole purpose is to inform and help the families of the unit. He can be reached at 430-5336 or via email at: eric.cain@us.army.mil.

It is hard to believe that three months have already gone by. As my mother said “the days drag but the weeks seem to fly by.” And when you think of it, it is so true. We all miss home and look forward to our return.

Hope all is well,
Brian Veneziano
Commander 126th AA

Girl Scouts Donate Cookies!!

On April 8th Girl Scout Troop 2256 donated 108 boxes of cookies for the soldiers to enjoy. The presentation was held at the Well’s Congressional Church on April the 8th. Lt. Cain and Paige Dennison gave a presentation on the history of the 126th as well as a history of the current Military Conflict. The 126th was presented a Flag from Kimberly Merrifield, Troop Leader, which has been deployed three times to the Middle East and signed by the unit for Historical purposes. Paige Dennison was on hand to support the FRG program and answer any questions the girls had about that program. In addition, Troop 2256 has decided to sponsor our unit throughout their whole deployment. We are so lucky to have this support and great partnership.



Wives Night Out

In February a small group gathered at the Olive Garden for dinner followed by fun at the Hollywood Slots in Bangor. In March, those who could attend brought munchies to Sticks and Stones bead shop in Brewer where we made our own jewelry. In April, a small group gathered to make pottery at Paper n' Clay on Stillwater Ave in Bangor. Ladies, wives night out is a time for us to get together and share common interests and getting to know the other spouses of those in the unit. Again, it is the 2nd Friday of every month. All are invited and if interested please contact Sandy Daniel at: sndydaniel@aol.com.

Women Take Self Defense

The women of the 126th are taking self defense classes, taught by Officer Cathy Rumsey from the Bangor Police Department. This is a great bonding event, a great confidence builder and a powerful tool to have under the belt. All military significant others, including teenage children are invited to attend.



Please contact Jodi Veneziano at: jodi@nazmail.com or 848-7892



April Family Time

In April the families got together at the Maine Children’s Hospital in Bangor. Several families were in attendance and fun was enjoyed by all who attended. Each month something new is planned, so plan to join the families one month. See ya there!

Please contact Stephanie at: stebo11@roadrunner.com or Abby at smcajc@uninets.net to RSVP and/or for more information.

Maine Army National Guard family Program

The National Guard Family Support Program works with National Guard service members, Guard families, school educators, administrators and service organizations to support the social and emotional needs of National Guard families. Our mission is to support the social, emotional, and academic needs of Maine National Guard

Time to Start Thinking Summer, 9th Annual Youth Camp 2008

The Maine National Guard Youth Camp is designed to offer an active, healthy environment where Guard children will grow in confidence, character, and friendships with other Guard children. Activities include rappelling, archery, kayaking, confidence course, overnight bivouacs, arts & crafts, hiking and swimming. Deadline for Campers deadline is May 1st!

Dates: Week 1 - July 27th - August 2nd

Week 2 - August 3rd - 9th

The cost for an entire week of fun at camp at scenic Bog Brook is only \$50

Ages 9-12 Youth Camp campers

Ages 13- 14 Cadets

Ages 15 – 18 Jr Counselors

Ages 4 – 8 Day Campers (must be accompanied by a parent volunteer)

Maine National Guard Youth Symposium

Who: Military Teens Ages 13-18

(Mandatory training for teens who want to be Junior Counselors at camp)

When: 27 – 29 June 2008

Where: Sugarloaf Ski Resort, Carrabassett Valley, Maine

What: Amazing event packed with activities. Bill Cordes, a nationally known motivational trainer will spend much of the time as we learn about the YOGOWYPI factor. To learn more on Bill Cordes visit him at his web site www.billcordes.com/biography.htm. Other exciting activities will include teambuilding events, games, swimming, dancing and wrapping up the weekend, Sunday we will leave Sugarloaf for a day on the wild Kennebec River!!! Yes, White Water Rafting with Windfall Outdoors.

Transportation: Teens will load two busses from Augusta & Bangor on Friday morning at 8:00 a.m. and will be delivered back to these points on Sunday early evening.

Cost: Cost for the entire event to include two nights lodging, rafting, food, and training materials is \$75.00

How to apply: Go to www.me.ngb.army.mil/family to print off application and mail it to the Family Program Office no later than **15 May 2008**. Space is limited to 80 teens so apply today! A confirmation and further instructions will be mailed out no later than 1 June.



**Visit us on our website at
www.me.ngb.army.mil/family**

FROM THE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR'S CORNER!!

Things have been very busy getting settled and organized. We are about done our "right seat ride" and will be assuming the mission completely very soon. This is where each section works with a representative from the outgoing unit to learn the ropes of how best to do things. Some of our flight crews have already done MEDEVAC missions during the orientation phase. We have pushed crews to the forward sites as well. There is so much needed for mission accomplishment and without aircraft maintenance, operations, supply and the motor pool to support the flight crews we wouldn't be able to save lives like we do. You can be very proud of this company in how we have come together to "get the job done"! It takes a team effort to be successful and we have done that. Flight crews are learning the area that they will be flying by doing Local Area Orientation flights. The 238th, the Indiana Unit that we are replacing, have done an excellent job in the hand off process. They were even good enough to move into tents so we could move into the permanent living quarters or Container Housing Units (CHU's). Living conditions here are so much better than our first tour in 2003-2004. The CHU's are two soldier rooms with access to cable TV. When we first arrived there were plenty of things to buy from the Indiana soldiers. There were TV's, microwave ovens, refrigerators, furniture and you name it. It was a giant flea market! Considering the conditions, we are very fortunate.

We are slowly getting acclimated to the hot weather here. Since arriving in Iraq from Kuwait it has been somewhat cooler. Although 90 degrees is not what people of Maine would call cool!

We are having a Change of Command Ceremony and we will be flying the Maine State flag atop the bunker that we use as a hangar. I am also in the process of getting more sent to fly at the forward MEDEVAC sites.

I hope all the families are doing well and please keep the letters and the emails coming!

CSM Curtis



Spotlight Soldier of the Month

Our outstanding soldier of the month is SGT Matthew Brown. Because of his untiring efforts and “a never give up until the mission is accomplished” attitude, Black Bear MEDEVAC was able to successfully assume the mission from the Indiana unit.

SGT Brown’s job is to troubleshoot communication problems for both ground and air assets via the phone which enables the Unit to maintain a “ready status” to support the MEDEVAC mission. He assumed the role of the S6 Communications Officer and Information Officer which set the Unit up for success once occupying Tallil Air Base. He set up computer accounts for the Advance Party and Main Body. This laid the ground work for the Forward Bases to obtain computer accounts once on station.



SGT Brown also worked 12 to 16 hour days preparing the communication section to better support MEDEVAC operations. He trained his four soldiers to a level where they can be proficient and be confident when they push forward to a Forward MEDEVAC site. Because of the efforts by soldiers like SGT Brown who work diligently “behind the scenes” we continue to be successful in what we do best and that is, to save lives! Congratulations to SGT Brown for a job well done! **CSM Curtis**

**“ALL THAT IS NECESSARY FOR EVIL TO
SUCCEED IS FOR GOOD MEN TO DO NOTHING!”**

- EDMUND BURKE



Major Veneziano shaking hands with the commander of the 238th Indiana unit they are replacing.

CW4 John Richardson in preparation for flight.

